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ABSTRACT

The University of Tennessee's management training and development efforts are described. The program is designed to improve the performance of academic and nonacademic department heads (middle managers) and includes an 8-day workshop called the Institute for Leadership Effectiveness. In addition to the attention given to the formation of networks, the institute seeks to give participants information about themselves, their institution, and the external environment in which the university must operate. Participants complete self-assessment instruments that provide insight into their communication, leadership, and conflict-handling styles. They are given the opportunity to exchange views with state legislators, top university officials, and recognized leaders in higher education. Participants are exposed to a variety of reading materials, and case studies enable them to examine pertinent higher education issues. Attention is directed to the uncertainties of the leadership task, the diversity of roles, and the conflicts and rewards of leadership. The institute explores topics that are generally ignored in professional and management development workshops. Since the training staff believe that learning effective leadership skills involves practicing skills, an experiential approach is emphasized. (SW)

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Management Development at The University of Tennessee

by EMERSON H. FLY and KATHERINE N. HIGH

In the modern university, mid-level administrators must be planners, budgeters, performance appraisers, delegators, group process facilitators, problem solvers, and decision makers. Since 1978, the University of Tennessee (UT) has been creating training and development programs to improve the performance of its middle managers. UT was instrumental in the development of Exxon's Higher Education Management Institute (HEMI), a project that designed, created, tested, and disseminated a management program applicable to colleges and universities. UT is a firm supporter of Model-NETICS, a training course utilizing 151 models for recalling and applying management principles, and makes available the Model-NETICS programs to approximately 100 UT employees each year.

The university has also developed a comprehensive inventory of short in-house programs on topics ranging from delegation, communication, selection, and evaluation, to time management, stress management, and data processing. These programs are conducted by a cadre of university personnel who are both content experts and skilled group leaders.

The centerpiece of UT's management training and development efforts, however, is the Institute for Leadership Effectiveness, an extensive eight-day workshop aimed at continuing the development of its middle managers, specifically academic and nonacademic department heads. The primary goal of the institute is to improve the processes of higher education by strengthening its leaders.

The institute accomplishes this goal by bringing together those who share a concern for leadership and providing them with a chance to identify and discuss issues related to the future direction of the field. Further, the institute allows participants to examine their communication and leadership styles in a way that gives them a basis for reflecting on, evaluating, and choosing courses of action in their jobs. The institute enables participants to experience and examine the uncertainties of task, the diversity of roles, the conflicts, and the rewards that are part of their role as leaders in higher education.

Although the bulk of the participants come from UT, five or six slots are made available for representatives of UT's sister higher education system, the State Board of Regents (SBR) System. In all cases participants are hand-chosen. The top official (either a chancellor or vice president) of each UT and

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SBR campus or unit selects one or more middle managers for the institute. Participants are chosen from academic departments and administrative units in roughly equal numbers. The university, through the institute, recognizes and honors those middle managers who, by their past service and accomplishments, show promise of continued leadership.

Participants at the institute can interact with personnel from varied backgrounds. The mix is a rich one—the head of the classics department may be the roommate of the head of campus security; the head of anesthesiology from the medical school may engage in problem-solving activities with the affirmative action officer.

While allowance is made during the institute for meetings of groups with similar backgrounds and concerns, participants spend most of their time in small groups whose membership is selected in a random fashion. Participants can thus realize that their problems are not always unique to their discipline or area (budgeting and personnel decisions are no more fun for the director of heating and air conditioning than they are for the head of the chemistry department). Moreover, interaction with people from all over the university and its sister institutions broadens and strengthens the informal communication network, enabling participants to receive better and more timely information, possible solutions to problems, and a firmer support system when they return to their campus and to their administrative responsibilities.

In addition to the attention given to the formation of networks, the institute seeks to give participants information about themselves, their institution, and the external environment in which the university must operate. Participants complete a number of self-assessment instruments that provide insight into their communication, leadership, and conflict-handling styles. They are given the opportunity to exchange views with prominent state legislators, top university officials, and recognized leaders in higher education. The presence of these leaders serves a threefold purpose—to dispense current information about relevant issues concerning the UT campuses, the state legislature, the federal government, and higher education; to allow participants to see firsthand how prominent leaders conduct themselves; and to lend prestige and weight to the institute, adding to participants' perception that selection to the institute is indeed an honor.

Participants are exposed to a variety of reading materials, from management theory to the history of UT. Case studies, written by training staff members, enable participants to wrestle with pertinent higher education issues rather than abstract theories or broad generalizations. These case studies encourage discussion, analysis, and, ultimately, corrective action. The issues, considerations, and possible consequences discussed at the institute are all designed to be transferable to participants' campus responsibilities. It is the strong feeling of the training staff of the institute that effective leadership involves the learning of certain skills and that the best way to learn a skill is to practice it. Therefore an experiential approach is emphasized at the institute, though traditional, purely cognitive approaches are also used.

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The university spends over $600 on each participant, an amount which includes travel to and from the site, food and lodging, materials expenses, and honoraria for outside speakers. All the institute's expenses are paid through a central university fund. The training staff, including many who have been involved in training and development efforts since 1978 and some who are recent graduates of the institute, receive no additional compensation for their work in designing and executing the program. Remarkably, it is considered as much an honor to serve on the training staff of the institute as it is to be selected as a participant.

Institute sites are generally at one of Tennessee's state parks, chosen for several reasons: they are remote and thus participants are not tempted to leave the institute for entertainment; they are inexpensive compared to privately owned conference centers; they cannot be surpassed in terms of their natural beauty; and park personnel are accommodating and sensitive to the unique needs of the institute. In their free time, participants can play tennis or golf, swim, ride, and hike, as the parks have magnificent scenery and exceptional recreational facilities. The institute has two sessions, each about four days long. One session is held in the fall, the second in the spring. In the interim, participants have the opportunity to experiment with what they learned and to begin using the networks developed at the institute.

The institute is designed to explore topics that are generally ignored in professional and management development workshops. Part I of the 1983-84 institute examined the following areas: personal communication style, the history and culture of UT, and external, political and economic forces facing the university. Participants completed an exercise that helped them classify their preferred communication styles and provided insight into their communication strengths and weaknesses. They then examined the culture and underlying values of their department, the campus, and the university, and investigated the implications of their preferred style in light of the prevailing culture in which they work. This examination was conducted with the aid of an instrument called "University Q," an adaptation of a corporate survey. Finally, participants were made aware of the external forces affecting the university, their departments, and themselves. This was accomplished through formal and informal presentations by two

of the university's vice presidents. An understanding of the relationships between and among the individual department head, the campus, and the outside environment was considered a critical aspect of leadership development.

In Part II, participants explored conflict, power and authority, and administrative values. Conflict was investigated via a conflict mode instrument, which assesses conflict-handling skills and enables participants to make judgments on the appropriateness of their behavior in conflict situations. Power and authority were examined from the perspective of "middle power"; participants engaged in a day-long simulated activity called "Organizations," developed especially for the institute. Through the simulation, participants were made more aware that "middleness" is a potentially empowering position and that they can influence the course of their institutions. Finally, participants took a look at the values they as administrators adhere to (as exemplified by their communication and conflict-handling styles) as well as the values the university promotes.

By the end of the institute, participants have a greater awareness of their communication, leadership, and conflict-handling styles, and of the effect of those styles on others. They have gained in-depth, current information on political and budget issues that affect their institution. They have had practice through experiential activities in developing techniques that will increase their effectiveness as group leaders. Participants have read about subjects ranging from Japanese management to institutional culture to group development. They have wrestled with (and perhaps reached some resolutions on) personnel problems, tenure problems, legal problems, or ethical problems they may be facing back home. And they have been initiated in a potentially powerful network of colleagues throughout the campuses and units of the university. They take home a number of tips, tools, and contacts that will enable them to do a better job.

Reactions obtained during and after the institute reveal that participants feel the program is very worthwhile. However, this is merely the beginning of the evaluation process. Positive reactions do not assure that learning has taken place, that behavior has changed, or that desired results have been achieved. The designers of the institute realize this, and although they have no guaranteed mechanism to measure learning or behavior change, certain indicators demonstrate that some of the desired results are being achieved.

Since their involvement in the institute, many participants have been given additional responsibilities or promotions within the university. A few have left UT to take more prestigious positions at other institutions. Clusters of department heads are beginning to form on the various UT campuses, composed of or organized by graduates of previous institutes. For example, on the UT Chattanooga campus, a council of department heads now makes recommendations to the chancellor on campus governance matters (e.g., improved morale, salary, academic programs). This council was formed, in part, by institute graduates who desired to make a positive change on their campus. Similar groups are beginning to form on other UT campuses as well. Past participants are requesting that an institute reunion be held so they can compare the progress they have made after their institute experience. The institute network is taking hold—new avenues of communication are opening up and participants are relying on each other for problem solving, expertise, and resource-sharing.

Although these results are not yet being measured systematically, they are beginning to take a recognizable shape. UT's administration is increasingly supportive of the institute. Admittedly far from perfect, the institute has developed over the years into a program that helps department heads hone their leadership skills and thereby "make a difference" to the university. ♦

AUTUMN IN ACCOUNTING

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